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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 008367

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PGOV PTER CO FARC ELN

SUBJECT: GOC AND FARC FROZEN ON HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGE;
CATHOLIC CHURCH FRUSTRATED BUT ENCOURAGED BY PARA PROCESS

Summary

1. (U) FARC "spokesperson" Luis Edgar Devia AKA Raul Reyes communicated on August 22 their demand that the GOC demilitarize certain municipalities as a precondition for talks on a humanitarian exchange. Reyes' statement effectively ended the Catholic Church's offer to mediate a "pre-dialogue" outside Colombia, an offer that President Uribe accepted on August 22. Episcopal Conference President Archbishop Luis Castro admitted he had run out of ideas on how to establish an exchange. He noted that the Justice and Peace Law will ensure accountability to victims in the paramilitary peace process. End summary.

FARC Demand Demilitarized Zone/GOC Offers Anything Else

2. (U) On August 22, the latest message from Reyes to a local news station, made public on August 29, reiterated the FARC's minimum requirement for any prisoner swap: a thirty-day demilitarized zone in the municipalities of Florida and Pradera, Valle de Cauca Department. The demilitarized zone has been a constant FARC demand for an exchange for more than a year, although the August 14 communique (below) did offer to limit the demobilization to thirty days. The GOC repeatedly has stressed its unwillingness to create such a zone, but offered measures such as "strategic corridors" to allow the FARC to enter/exit the trade area safely. On August 16, President Uribe noted in a communique from Casa de Narino that High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo remained authorized to meet with the FARC, to establish a meeting point without demilitarization, and to grant whatever other security guarantees the guerrillas choose. Based on these communiqués, neither side seems willing to budge on the demobilization issue at this time.

3. (U) Begin informal translation:

FARC Communique

We value the (victims') families' efforts to achieve an encounter between the national government and the FARC, to begin a humanitarian exchange process.

We suggest that the families propose to the government that it clear the municipalities of Florida and Pradera of all public forces for just 30 days to hold this meeting.

Military considerations prohibit our developing such an encounter in Aures, municipality of Caicedonia, although the nation recognizes and appreciates Aures residents' efforts.

Always, and without exception, including occasional international talks, the encounters between the FARC and different governments have been the focus of military hostilities which, today more than ever, we should avoid since it could indefinitely postpone any hope (of an exchange).

We are the most interested party in fixing the terms and realizing an exchange, but with clear guarantees. All other suggestions proposed, such as the fantastical strategic corridor, are false, vile speculations and allow childishness to bar the way to a possible agreement.

Compatriots,

Secretariat of the Estado Mayor Central

SIPDIS

Mountains of Colombia, August 14, 2005

End text.

Church "Pre-dialogue" Refused

4. (SBU) On August 22, the same day that Reyes issued his message insisting on the demilitarized zone, President Uribe approved the Catholic Church's offer to broker a negotiation "pre-dialogue" (reftel). The FARC's refusal seems to have been timed to quash the pre-dialogue before it became

established. Episcopal Council President Archbishop Castro told the Ambassador on August 31, "the process is dead," and confessed he was out of ideas on how to create an exchange agreement with the FARC. Castro plans to urge High Commissioner for Peace Restrepo to continue seeking options for an exchange, but acknowledged the GOC had offered talks with different interlocutors and locations, freed 23 FARC prisoners, and proposed denying the U.S. extradition request of "Simon Trinidad" without reciprocity from the FARC. Castro commented that the FARC had become rigid and speculated the guerrillas feared for their safety in an negotiation. Castro raised the issue of the hostage families' pressure on the GOC and the Catholic Church to find a solution, but noted that the French Ambassador to Colombia had reduced the "Ingridization" of French policy, referring to French pressure to recover dual French-Colombian national Ingrid Betancourt. Castro promised to continue looking for a way forward.

15. (SBU) Castro was optimistic about the paramilitary peace process. He dismissed critics of the Justice and Peace Law, many of whom he said had not read the law. He added that the Justice and Peace Law implemented a new concept to make justice and victim restitution a part of Colombia's peace process. He stressed that Colombians needed to make it work. Castro agreed that a truth commission would be a welcome addition to advance the national reconciliation process.

WOOD